

Idaho Conservation District Supervisors' Handbook

(Revised 2002)

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Preface

A conservation district supervisor has an important role as a local conservation leader. To effectively nurture conservation in your community, you should understand your role and responsibility as a supervisor. We developed this handbook as a reference to help you do that.

We tried to make this handbook as useful as possible. If you have any recommendations for improvements, we ask your help in making future editions better. Contact the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and share your comments.

Also, please note that this handbook is a basic guide to being a Conservation District supervisor. Specific details on how to carry out your responsibilities are available throughout the **Idaho Conservation District Procedures Manual** (referred to hereafter as: the "Procedures Manual") located in your district office. It is also important to participate in education programs and use other resources cited in this handbook to further your skills as a conservation leader.

Special thanks to the following members of the "Quality Assurance Committee" who evaluated the content and format of the first edition of this handbook. Without their help, this handbook would not be the product it is today.

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"There cannot be a more rational principle in the code of agriculture, than that every farm which is in good heart should be kept so; that everyone not in good heart should be made so....."

-James Madison

History of Conservation Districts

During the 1930s, the Dust Bowl made the need to conserve natural resources, particularly soil, very clear. Agencies ranging from land grant universities to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration researched and implemented conservation practices throughout the nation. Eventually, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) previously the Soil Conservation Service was created under the Soil Conservation Act of 1935 to develop and implement soil erosion control programs.

Sometimes agencies working with conservation ended up competing with each other. Local leadership was needed to help coordinate their efforts and tie them into local conditions and priorities. Because of this the U.S. Congress developed a model Conservation District law for consideration by state governments.

In 1939, the State legislature passed an enabling act, which established Conservation Districts in Idaho. Conservation districts were to direct programs protecting local renewable natural resources. Idaho now has 51 state recognized Conservation Districts organized pursuant to State statutes.

"The conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our National life."

- Theodore Roosevelt

Conservation Districts' Mission

Conservation districts develop and implement programs to protect and conserve soil, water, prime and unique farmland, rangeland, forestland, riparian land, wildlife, energy, and other renewable resources on nonfederal lands. Districts also help stabilize local economies and resolve conflicts in land use. Nationally, conservation districts usually operate under the following general policies:

- ◆ Local citizens should lead conservation efforts.
- ◆ The final responsibility for conservation lies with the landowner.
- ◆ Landowners have legitimate operating goals.
- ◆ Conservation Districts are responsive to both landowners and operators and the community as a whole.
- ◆ The best agricultural land should be maintained for agriculture.

Conservation Districts are subdivisions of state government, much like school boards. A board of five or seven supervisors govern each district. Supervisors are local residents who serve voluntarily without pay. All Idaho supervisors are elected by local citizens and must be landowners (including urban property owners, if their property is located in district boundaries) or farm operators in the district where elected.

Conservation Districts serve as the bridge between federal and state resource management agencies and land managers. While natural resource conservation is a national priority, the guiding philosophy of all Conservation District is that local people should make decisions on conservation problems on the local level, with technical assistance provided by government. As a district supervisor, you have a unique role among agencies managing Idaho's natural resources. You serve as the grass roots representative of landowners and the general public in your community, providing leadership and direction to bring **volunteer cooperation** in natural resource conservation programs. Upon taking the oath of office, you agreed to carry out the responsibilities of your position in accordance with the Idaho Conservation District Law (Idaho Code, Title 22, Chapter 27).

"The central thing for which conservation stands is to make this country the best possible place to live in, both for us and our descendants. It stands against the waste of natural resources which cannot be renewed, such as coal and iron; it stands for the perpetuation of the natural resources which can be renewed, such as food-producing soils and forests..."

- Gifford Pinchot

Supervisors Roles and Responsibilities: Program

Conservation district supervisors develop a wide variety of programs. Examples of successful Conservation District programs include:

- Technical assistance, materials, and equipment to control soil erosion and comply with federal and state laws.
- Sponsoring adult and youth education activities.
- Planning and implementing watershed-based water quality improvement projects.

To develop and maintain effective programs you must identify local conservation needs, set corresponding goals, plan to achieve those goals, ensure implementation of your plans, and evaluate the district program's effectiveness.

Planning

Planning is the basic tool for developing conservation district programs. There are several different levels of conservation district plans. A five-year plan is developed to address a five-year period and is updated annually. The five-year plan serves as a broad outline of your conservation district's response to long-term shifts in land use, population patterns, social values, and improvements in technology.

An annual plan portion of the five-year plan outlines specific objectives, activities, and personal responsibilities during the current year to achieve five-year plans. The five-year plan should be completed by May. You will also sponsor or cooperate in the development of project plans for watershed projects and other specific conservation efforts in your district.

Needs assessment

Before planning, you must assess and define the conservation problems and needs in your district. Landowners, operators, and those who work with them are the natural place to start. Since you are a public agency, you should consult with your community as well. This may be time consuming, but giving people a chance to provide input into district policy will enhance public support of Conservation District efforts. Community input may be obtained through casual contact, public meetings, mail and telephone surveys, local newspapers, and

many other methods. Idaho Conservation Districts *must* give public notice when annually updating their five-year plans.

In identifying conservation problems, don't be limited, however, by what landowners/operators or the public say. District supervisors are conservation leaders. Many important conservation issues are incorrectly or under-perceived by the average citizen or landowner. Professional advisors and associate supervisors can help you anticipate these problems and plan accordingly.

Setting goals

After researching and defining local conservation issues, you must develop goals to address identified needs. Goals have different levels. On your five-year plan, you set broad strategic goals that focus on your Conservation District's direction for the next 1-5 years. In the annual plan portion of the five-year plan, you will list more specific, measurable objectives to meet strategic goals.

Writing "The Plan"

You may have encountered various planning techniques in other volunteer service. Don't be intimidated by fancy planning terminology and techniques. Planning is basically an organized way of getting things done. After setting goals you will:

1. Prioritize goals;
2. Brainstorm alternative solutions to meet goals;
3. Assess the readiness of the district to implement solutions (whether the district has adequate personnel, current district financial assets, etc.)
4. Choose between alternative solution; and
5. Identify who will implement solutions and when.

The results of this process are then written up into a plan, which serves as a blueprint for the district, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System faculty, and other state and federal agencies and public whose assistance you will recruit. When planning, keep the following key points in mind:

- Plan for planning:
 - Appoint a planning committee to coordinate your efforts
 - Obtain a suitable place for planning (consider setting up a retreat to develop your plans)
 - Gather information on current programs, Conservation District operating policies, growth trends and other developments, resource problems, district finances, personnel availability, etc.

- Supervisors should do the planning, not paid staff or agency personnel--the latter supply you with basic information and advice.
- Involve all supervisors, as well as associates, advisors, committee members, cooperating agency representatives, and interested citizens.
- Keep the plan simple.
- Be creative--don't automatically accept *the way we've always done it*. You may want to look at plans developed by districts in neighboring counties or states for ideas.
- Don't try to accomplish more than is attainable--credibility will be lost.

Give copies of the completed plan to all participants and others with a stake in your efforts, such as county commissioners or special interest groups. Also provide the media and community leaders with a news release explaining the district's major goals and activities.

Implementation

After finalizing plans, you will implement planned tasks, mobilizing the sources of assistance with the expertise to deal with the needs you have identified (these sources of expertise and/or assistance should have already been consulted in the planning process). Many Conservation Districts have a program committee to oversee this. The program committees' responsibilities may be divided among other committees (e.g., forestry committee, water quality committee, etc.) Regardless of how you divide up implementation, keep the district program on the course you have planned. Keep some flexibility for new developments, but don't let the district get sidetracked from your plan.

Evaluation

After implementing your plan, evaluate your accomplishments. Did your district meet planned goals? How well? To the extent it didn't, why not? What could you change to meet your goals? Were your efforts consistent with your mission?

Build documented evaluation into every level of your district's program. Being a supervisor is time consuming, but don't let evaluation slide. Unless you record what you did, how it worked, and how to improve it, a future board (perhaps with all new members) will likely repeat the same mistakes. Districts must also report annual accomplishments when they send updated five-year plans to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission. Grants also typically require evaluation.

There are many forms of evaluation. You may evaluate your board's internal functions ([see section on supervision](#)), reckoning if the board functions are sound, then its activities are too. Another method is to evaluate the district's program. You can evaluate yourselves or obtain evaluation from an outside observer.

You will probably use a combination of techniques to evaluate your district's program. Regardless of how you evaluate, you need standards to measure your success. To evaluate soil conservation activities, for example, you measure tons of soil saved.

Be sure to integrate complete evaluations into your planning efforts. Applying for the Goodyear Award (see description in glossary) is a good test of your abilities to evaluate district programs.

Policy

One role inherent in Conservation District program development is setting policy for how district personnel and funds are used to meet conservation needs. Your policies should establish both the types of service the district provides and guidelines for appropriate use of district resources. Basic mandatory policies for running a Conservation District are developed by the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission, based on Idaho Conservation District law. Details on these policies are in the Procedures Manual.

Other district policies will have been set by supervisors who served before you and are not necessarily mandatory. You may have a policy manual specific to your district. If not, you should strongly consider starting one. It is difficult to improve your board's policies if you are not clear to what they are.



Study local Conservation District policies to see if they are still appropriate to current conditions. Update them if necessary. Delete those policies that are no longer necessary. Consult materials provided by the Idaho and National Association of Conservation Districts for further input on district policy.

"Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is headed away from rather than toward, an intense consciousness of the land. Your true modern is separated from the land by many middlemen and by innumerable physical gadgets."

- Aldo Leopold

Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities: **Information, Education, & Public Relations**

Conservation Districts encourage volunteer cooperation of landowners and the general public. One way to do this is through information or education. Information efforts involve disseminating facts about new programs or technologies to various audiences. Education programs are more detailed efforts, which focus on training individuals in specific skills.

Landowners and operators may need help to understand and apply conservation values and practices. The general public must be reached to help them understand their stake in conservation and contribute their financial, political, and volunteer support to district programs. You must also inform local, state and federal legislators on conservation implications of issues they address.

To have effective information or education programs, supervisors should understand their audiences and the most appropriate methods to reach them.

Adults

Conservation Districts work with many adult audiences, including landowners and users, community leaders, civic clubs, cooperating agency personnel and others. Our learning styles usually change as we get older. We have more life experiences, look for education that we can apply in the present, and expect teachers to be sensitive to our education needs. Finally, adults have the freedom to participate *or not* in information or education efforts. There are a variety of methods to reach adults, including:

- Personal contact,
- Displays,
- Inviting persons to board meetings,
- Open house tours,
- Annual meetings,
- Community meetings,
- Newsletters,
- Field tours,
- Demonstration plots,
- Case studies,
- Workshops,
- Speeches or films, and
- Panel discussions.

Contact your local University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System office for assistance in developing conservation education programs for adults, particularly on more formal programs, where you are trying to train individuals in specific skills.

Legislators

Legislators are a unique adult audience. Local, state and federal laws often directly affect District programs. The Idaho Association of Conservation Districts (IASCD) and the National Association of Conservation District (NACD) are the principal legislative arms for Conservation Districts.

These two associations speak and act on conservation districts' combined voice to support active programs to advance public understanding of conservation issues and gain a higher state and national priority for conservation and wise use of natural resources. Inform them of your legislative concerns.

You can assist the IASCD and NACD by testifying on behalf of Conservation Districts at the state and national level. Learn how the legislative process works and get to know your representatives' backgrounds and views on conservation. Make personal contact with representatives through concise, well thought out letters or telephone calls. Invite them to district meetings and events. You may also have opportunities to give testimony in formal meetings or hearing on conservation issues.

Youth

A major aim of conservation education is to enrich peoples' conservation values. Youth offer one of the most fertile grounds for enriching the general public's conservation values, particularly in a society that is further removed from the land.

You may work with the whole youth population or specific groups, such as schools, 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and others. Try to be conscious of the special needs of different youth audiences (e.g., teens vs. kindergartners) and use the most appropriate methods. It is vital to "get on their level" to be effective. Review other districts' education resources. Conservation Districts have used many methods to reach youth, including:

- Youth conservation education scholarships for camps or academic programs;
- Serving as a leader in a youth group (e.g., 4-H project leader, or a scout merit badge counselor);
- Training teachers and youth leaders in conservation;
- Participation in existing youth programs, such as school field days, Envirothon, 4-H and other youth group events, IASCD poster and speech contests, etc.;

- Providing educational materials, such as publications, videos, and books for existing youth programs;
- Inviting youth group leaders to board meetings;
- Setting up a "youth board" --a small scale version of the Conservation District board;
- Securing sponsors for awards, and other conservation programs for youth;
- Encouraging youth groups to implement conservation plans on youth group facilities and property;
- Developing conservation programs and projects which can involve youth; and
- Locating conservation projects in areas meaningful to youth.

The NACD and the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System have a variety of ready-made educational materials for working with youth. There are also materials developed by other groups, such as Project Learning Tree (PLT), Project WILD, Project WET, and Idaho Ag in the Classroom, and others.

Public Relations

Your Conservation District's public image affects every aspect of your work. Public relations is a continuing program to help people understand what your Conservation District is, what you are doing, and why it is important. Good public relations can¹:

- Inform the public of what the Conservation District is and does,
- Increase the quality and amount of assistance your district obtains from cooperating agencies,
- Promote favorable recognition of the district,
- Make potential cooperators aware of the availability of district assistance,
- Increase the funds your district receives, and
- Improve the quality of people who serve as district supervisors or on district committees.

Your board should appoint one person or a committee to be in charge of your district public relations. The district should set goals for basic understanding you would like the public to have about our district. These public relations goals should grow naturally out of what your Conservation District is doing, then permeate all aspects of your district programs.

1 Adapted from United Way and NACD

Study different audiences and tailor your public relations messages to be interesting to each in developing and maintaining your Conservation District's public relations program:

- Board members and associate supervisors should represent the board in person whenever possible -- **don't rely on district employees for this.**
- Pay attention to public relations details throughout your district program; follow through on commitments; pay attention to cultural differences; and give adequate recognition to agencies, associations and other groups you work with.



The NACD and many other sources have more specific information on effective public relations methods. The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission can also provide help.

Working with the Media

Whether you are engaging in information, education, or public relations, you will use a whole range of media, from personal contact to mass media.

Examples include:

- Personal telephone or conference calls,
- Personal letters,
- Newsletters, annual reports,
- Brochures, handouts, mailers,
- Newspapers, and magazine (columns, regular features, press releases, calendar listings),
- Radio and television (press coverage at meetings, public service announcements (PSAs, interview shows),
- Press conferences,
- Events, such as Soil Stewardship Week, Envirothon, State Forestry Contest,
- Slideshow, videos, PowerPoint presentations
- Displays, shows, fairs,
- Demonstrations (with signs), and
- Posters.

Try to establish friendly, mutually beneficial relationships with media representatives. Invite local media to all of your events, including social activities. If you convince them of the importance of your program, they will convince the public. Your district might have a committee to coordinate media relations and decide:

- Why you want media coverage
- Who your audiences are, and
- Which media would be most effective in reaching different audiences.

"Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had chosen a people,, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue."
-Thomas Jefferson

Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities:

Supervision

People are the primary resource of a Conservation District. Part of your board's responsibility is to supervise yourselves, paid district staff, associate supervisors, committees, volunteers, and coordinate with agency personnel, so everyone can smoothly carry out the Conservation district mission.

Board Members

The first people you must supervise are yourselves, both as individuals and as a board. **As an individual board member, are you:**

- Attending and actively participating in all board meetings?
- Reading meeting minutes and following through on items you accepted responsibility for?
- Carrying out your committee responsibilities?
- Keeping abreast of local conservation issues?
- Separating your personal views from those of the board when you disagree with the board's policy, but are acting as a District representative?
- Attending division and state meetings of the Idaho Association of Conservation Districts?

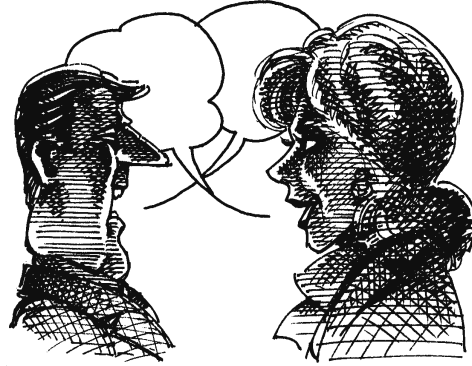
As a board, are you:

- Identifying local Conservation needs and meeting them?
- Keeping your Conservation District's mission in focus?
- Supporting and working effectively with district staff and cooperating agencies?
- Efficiently implementing District programs?
- Making sure your board's policies and activities are consistent with the policies of the Idaho Conservation Commission and the Idaho Association of Conservation Districts?
- Submitting budgets on time and following correct budget and audit procedures?
- Developing fresh annual plans?
- Reporting to the public on your District's programs?

You may evaluate yourselves or have someone from the outside evaluate your board (e.g., peer review by supervisors from outside the state or region). There are a variety of board evaluation tools in the books listed in the "Reference" section of the handbook.

Obtaining New Board Members

Conservation District supervisors are elected to four-year terms. Supervisors can be re-elected, but you should still cultivate potential new board members constantly. Try to keep board membership representative of all types of landowners or operators, community groups, and conservation interests in your District. The more representative your board is, the broader the base of support for your District's activities.



Also look at skills your board needs (including interpersonal skills). For example, if your district's water quality programs aren't as strong as you would like, you might recruit someone with a strong water quality background.

Nomination Procedures

Your board should have a "nominating committee" to search for persons who are committed to conservation and willing to devote time and effort as board members. First, look to District volunteers, especially associate supervisors and District standing committee members. It is also helpful if new board members have contacts in the community. Don't go for only well-known names, however. They have often already committed time and energy to other volunteer organizations. You may pass up very qualified individuals in the process.

The nominating committee should keep a list of potential supervisor candidates. Your board should carefully study this list and decide whom to approach. Once this decision is made, give these persons basic information on the Conservation District, what a supervisor does, and why they should consider running for office. Give them a job description and other specific, accurate information about time commitments, such as board, committee, and association meetings and program assignments. Help them determine if they are willing to commit the time and energy required of a District supervisor.

Election Procedures

Conservation District elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each even-numbered year. Before the election, you must give public notice that you are accepting nominations for district supervisors. Nominating forms for prospective supervisors are available from your county clerk or at your district office. If a supervisor resigns or is removed

from office, the board may appoint someone to fill their term. The Procedures Manual lists specific procedures for electing and appointing new supervisors.

New Supervisor Orientation

After new supervisors take the oath of office, welcome them with a letter or phone call and issue news releases announcing their new position. Formally orient new supervisors, but don't burden them with too much information at once. The board chair usually orients new supervisors initially. Committees they are appointed to should orient them as well. The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts can also help orient new supervisors.

Continuing Supervisor Development

Try to develop your board skills with written materials and other resources. Share these materials with your fellow supervisors as well. Conservation District division meetings and the annual meeting of the Idaho Association of Conservation Districts are also opportunities to develop supervisor skills. It is also beneficial to periodically rotate board members to different positions and committee assignments to broaden their experience and "promote" them.

Don't forget awards! Recognition for supervisor service, effort, and development is important. The Goodyear Conservation Award, Doyle Scott Award, and Idaho District Education Awards are presented annually to Conservation District supervisors, to recognize outstanding leadership.

Associate Supervisors

Associate supervisors are officially appointed by the board as advisors and representatives. Associates don't vote on board decisions, but augment your knowledge and experience, and assist with district programs. They also offer a way to cultivate potential new supervisors, allow former supervisors to remain active in the district, and broaden community input to your district. Be sure to orient associates just as you would supervisors, and involve them in meaningful activities and projects.

Staff

Volunteer board members often have limited time. Conservation District employees can help you implement your programs and policies more effectively. They can also:

- Help coordinate board activities;
- Provide objective input and professional expertise;
- Provide information, data or legwork, and other details; and
- Serve as agents of the district, contacting landowners, agencies and others regarding district business.

You may fill a variety of staff positions:

District Administrative Assistant

A Administrative Assistant is typically one of the first employees a district hires. This person can create a favorable impression, as the first contact many cooperators and others have with the district. Administrative Assistants can help prepare correspondence, agendas, minutes, plans, reports, newsletters, and news stories. They can also arrange for meetings, maintain district files and accounting records, and perform other clerical tasks.

District Manager/Administrative Assistant

A district manager serves as the primary staff person or "executive" for the Conservation District. This person can mediate problems or complaints, work with cooperating agencies to gather information for your planning efforts, and keep you informed of current conservation accomplishments and opportunities.

Information Specialist

An information specialist assists you with information and public relations. They may write newsletter and newspaper articles, prepare radio and TV coverage, and work with cooperating agencies and organizations in joint efforts.

Technician

Conservation district technicians may collect or test soil or water samples, develop and maintain resource inventories, work with agencies on conservation research, write reports, follow-up and review conservation planning progress with district cooperators, plan and apply conservation treatments, inspect special project construction, and assist other agencies providing technical assistance through the district.

Equipment Manager

Some Conservation Districts own conservation tillage drills or other conservation equipment to use or rent. Your district might consider hiring an equipment manager to maintain or even operate district equipment.

Consultant

If your district needs short-term or very specialized work done (e.g., fisheries habitat improvement, water quality monitoring), consider working with a consultant. Consultants are not truly Conservation District employees. The district does not supervise them daily and their work place is outside district offices.

Your district may hire individuals to perform any combination of these tasks. Whatever arrangements you make be sure that the position description fits the necessary tasks.

Employment procedures

Before hiring, you should identify your needs for an employee. Can you get those needs met by working more closely with an existing agency? If not, analyze the tasks that need to be accomplished, then write a position description, which lists concise statements of what an employee would do. Then determine how much the district should pay this person and where to obtain those funds. The *NACD Personnel Management Guidebook for Conservation District Officials* is a helpful resource to help you write position descriptions.

Finally, the position is ready to be filled. This is the responsibility of the contact supervisor (a district supervisor designated by the board to be the primary contact with the employee(s)². Before actively recruiting, prepare a fact sheet that shows:

- details of employment,
- whether the position is full or part-time,
- pay range,
- term of the position (is the position permanent or temporary; if the latter, how long will the position last),
- who they officially work for and report to (applicants need clear information on the relationship of the position to agency(s) the district works closely with),
- amount of sick and annual leave and benefits, and
- other facts important to the position.

You should also prepare a position announcement that includes:

- a short description of the Conservation District,
- salary range,
- necessary qualifications,
- brief review of the position description, and
- equal employment opportunity provisions.

If the employee will use office space or equipment of an assisting agency, a cooperative agreement must be developed and signed by all parties concerned. Finally, you should either prepare or obtain an application form.

Next, advertise the position and collect applications. Then review applications, check references and interview applicants. The entire board is then briefed on the applicants and the interviewers recommendations, so they can choose.

After a candidate has accepted employment, notify the other applicants, set up a starting date, and obtain personnel and benefit forms. Make sure new employees understand responsibilities and how to carry them out. Orient them to the district and train them in specific district procedures.

² Some boards may authorize a district manager to supervise other employees. However, only supervisors may authorize the hiring of a new employee.

The Procedures Manual has more information on position descriptions, fact sheets, position announcements, application forms, and other details of hiring district employees.

Salaries and Benefits

Just as natural resources must be stewarded with care, so should Conservation District employees. Staff turnover can be very costly in time and dollars--it is worth hanging on to good people. As supervisors, you are accomplishing important work. District employees can multiply your effectiveness many times.

Provide district employees with appropriate salary, professional development opportunities, health insurance, sick leave, vacation, holidays, and retirement. There are also legally required employee programs, including Social Security, unemployment insurance, industrial insurance, and state and federal income tax. Your district must also adhere to equal employment opportunity and other laws that any employer must follow.

Staff Evaluation

Conservation District employees should have an annual work plan and be evaluated yearly to clarify expectations, identify continued professional development needs, and share concerns. This is the contact supervisor's responsibility, unless your district has several employees and you delegate this to a district manager (the district manager would still be evaluated by the contact supervisor or the entire district board).

You can reasonably expect the following from staff³:

- Attention to details of meetings;
- Complete, concise, and accurate information;
- Honesty in individual and organizational relationships;
- Judicious use of time;
- Meeting of agreed upon deadlines, with notification if deadlines cannot be met;
- Prompt response to requests for information; and
- Prompt return of phone calls.

In return for this, staffs working for your board can reasonably expect³:

- Fulfillment of commitments within agreed upon deadlines
- Organizational knowledge and ability
- Candid performance appraisal and assistance in performance
- Support in controversial situation
- Easy access by phone or visitation

³ Adapted from Conrad and Glenn, p.116-119 and Ty Clark, Washington Association of District Employees

- Loyalty, confidentiality, and sensitivity
- Incentives and rewards to promote and recognize accomplishments.

Board/Staff Relationships

Relationships between your board and staff must be very clear. It can be exasperating for a district employee to have "five bosses at once," especially if they offer conflicting input! The contact supervisor should be the only board member who works directly with the staff. He or she should be keenly aware of employee concerns, initiate evaluations, salary increases, and other personnel actions.

The contact supervisor may rely on an NRCS or other agency representative for daily supervision. If you have a district manager, they may supervise the other employees with the contact supervisor working through the manager.

The types of tasks performed, or "roles" of board members versus staff, should also be very clear. Although there is overlap, the board generally sets policy and staff implements it. Check to see how closely your board's function in relation to district employees fits this standard. If you hired staff to do a job, let them do it (but don't expect them to do your job also). Keep your respective roles as clear as possible at all times.

The Idaho District Employees Association (IDEA) can be a tremendous resource for both supervisors and district employees in clearly defining and strengthening relationships between the board and staff. IDEA was established to develop district employees' abilities and to act as their voice.

Also, NRCS personnel often act as "staff" for a district. Conservation Districts have had a close, productive relationship with the NRCS. If their schedule and priorities permit them, encourage their assistance to your Conservation District. But, as with regular staff, don't let the NRCS or other assisting agencies exert too much power over your district. Don't abdicate your legal responsibilities (especially policy and public relations) to district staff or NRCS personnel.

Brian O'Connell⁴ sums up a final word on staff expectations in a recent book:

*"Most organizations go into a temporary downturn when staff is first hired...A wonderful group of dedicated volunteers, through their own individual efforts and without a staff backup, have scrambled, kicked, and scratched their way to have a significant enough program and are now at a point where they need and can afford some staff assistance. They hire a person and immediately the volunteers relax...they find that the agency is doing less than before they hired staff...Volunteers will tend to conclude that obviously the wrong staff was hired..."*⁴

O'Connell, Brian. 1985. The board member's book - making a difference in voluntary organizations. p. 33-



If your district is hiring employees for the first time, don't expect too much from them all at once.

Volunteers

Most people involved in your district are volunteering their time and energy as supervisors, associates, committee members, or in other roles. For these volunteers to feel their service was worth contributing, they must see concrete achievements. To do this, they must be supervised and coordinated.

In many ways, supervising volunteers is similar to supervising paid staff. Develop **position descriptions** for volunteers just as you would paid employees. This will help you focus on concrete needs for the position and assure the volunteer that you need someone to do a real job. The position description also acts as a written agreement, legally protecting the volunteer and the district. After writing position descriptions, develop recruitment, orientation, training, and evaluation programs for volunteers. You may want to have a **volunteer coordinator** (similar to a contact supervisor) to help carry out these duties.

Do everything you can to make volunteers feel comfortable and fulfilled in the service they are rendering to conservation. Self-expression, philanthropy, and many other factors motivate volunteers. Try to help them fulfill these needs. Treat volunteers as co-workers: provide good working conditions; promote them to greater responsibilities; give them a part in planning; and let them know how much you appreciate them, both personally and professionally. Supervisors and other Conservation District volunteers serve without monetary compensation for their time; but if they incur other expenses in their service to your district, try to reimburse them.

"The history of every nation is eventually written in the way it cares for its soil."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities:

Administration

Supervisors administer the district by delegating tasks through a structure of board officers and members, committees, and others. They also secure and budget districts funds and document their activities for the public.

Administrative structure

Conservation District administration is led by board **officers** and carried out through **committees**. Regardless of the office you hold or committees you are on, you must understand their roles and how they interrelate.

Chair

The Chair is the head of your board. The Chair sets the meeting agenda; presides at meetings; appoints committees, assigns their responsibilities and asks for their reports; and orients new supervisors. The Chair cannot vote, except to break a tie. Nor can the Chair make or second a motion. They may "entertain a motion," but someone else must state or second it.

Vice Chair

The Vice Chair acts in place of the Chair when needed and advises the Chair on program and policy. They also arrange special programs for regular board meetings and chair at least one standing committee.

Treasurer

The Treasurer oversees the Conservation District's finances and usually serves as chair of the finance committee. He or she leads budget development; receives, deposits and disburses funds; keeps complete financial records; and presents financial statements at meetings. The Procedures Manual lists further responsibilities of the board treasurer.

Committees

Some Conservation District work may be accomplished through committees. Committees study district business in a specific area, such as finance or equipment, and sift out important matters for the board to consider. Committees also implement and monitor decisions made by the board and gather support from organizations and agencies represented on the committee.



There are many different types of committees. A **standing committee** is a permanent committee charged with working on a basic aspect of district work.

Conservation Districts typically have standing committees for planning, district operations, education, finance, research, land-use planning and water quality.

Other district functions may require **ad hoc committees** (short term committees) for a specific task and time period. Examples include watersheds, elections, annual meeting, and awards functions and grant committees.

The Chair may appoint (with board approval) him or her self, other board members associates, or interested citizens as committee members. Look to people with an active personal or professional interest in the committee's purpose. Committees also serve as an "entry point" and training ground for people who may eventually become district supervisors.

Make each committee members experience as enjoyable as possible. Encourage their full participation, letting all members vote on committee decisions whether they are supervisors or not. Include opportunities at board meetings for recognition of committee progress. Regardless of whether a committee is ad-hoc or standing, each should have a specific commission, similar to a "job description" for an individual.

Meetings

Meetings are fundamental to conducting Conservation District business. Monthly board meetings have two basic purposes 1) to decide on Conservation District policies and 2) monitor their implementation. Board meetings also serve social, inspirational, and communication purposes.

Conservation Districts must follow Idaho's open meeting law. As a political subdivision of the state of Idaho, districts hold regular meetings and special meetings with the authority to make decisions and form public policy. Therefore districts must not conduct these meetings in secret. Districts must give public notice of all meetings. Any board decision that doesn't comply with this law becomes null and void. For more details on how to comply with this law, consult the Procedures Manual.

Supervisors also participate in meetings of committees, Conservation District associations, and groups where they represent the district. Regardless of the nature of the meeting, there are many techniques to make them run smoothly and effectively, whether you are presiding or not.

Notify participants well ahead of the meeting (preferably at least two weeks). This notification should include an **agenda**, which lists: the reason for the meeting, location, time, items to be discussed, estimated meeting length, and important reference materials. Most meeting agendas follow this basic order:

1. Reading of the minutes
2. Treasurer's report
3. Old business
4. Committee reports
5. New business
6. Plans for next meeting
7. Adjournment

It doesn't hurt to give committee members a reminder telephone call a day or two before the meeting.

Pay close attention to meeting arrangements. Plan in advance for a comfortable room, parking, refreshments, and audio-visual resources (easels, blackboards, public address systems, slide projects, etc.) Arrange the room so everyone has as much face-to-face contact as possible (e.g., round table or square "donut"). If you invite the public or guests, consider setting name cards in front of everyone.

Parliamentary Procedure

Most meetings, especially formal meetings, are run on the basis of parliamentary procedure or **Robert's Rules of Order**. Under these rules, a voting member suggests the board make a decision by stating a **motion** (*I move we make an amendment to the motion that...*). A second board member states their support for the motion by **seconding the motion** (*I second the motion*). The board then discusses the merits of the motion. Motions that are not seconded die. If a board member wants to change the motion, he or she can move to **amend the motion** (*I move we make an amendment to the motion that...*). Several amendments may be added to the original motion. Each amendment must be seconded and voted on. After discussion, the Chair re-states the motion then the "**motion has been carried.**" You must have a **quorum** of at least three of five supervisors, or four of seven supervisors (not associate supervisors) to make any official decisions at a Conservation District board meeting.

This is a brief description of parliamentary procedure. Consult the Procedures Manual for other rules covering specific situations, such as "amending an amendment." Use some restraint in applying Robert's Rules, to provide flexibility to address details. If things get too "hot," you can always fall back on Robert's Rules, perhaps through an appointed **parliamentarian** (someone who understands the details of Robert's Rules and helps the group adhere to them).

Group Process

It is also important to be aware of group process at meetings. We all engage in a variety of behaviors at meetings. We do some things to accomplish tasks, others to maintain the cohesiveness of the group, and still others to fulfill individual agendas (both positive and negative). Groups must balance between task (getting the group's work done) and relationship (helping people enjoy working in the group). An agenda helps you focus on the task to accomplish at a meeting.

Relationship is a little more complicated. People have many different ways of operating in a group. Step back and look for patterns in the way you communicate with others and see what you can improve. Persons' attributes that drive you "crazy" when working with them probably have positive sides as well--try to identify that side, appreciate it, and work together.

You may want to look for resources to enhance listening and other group skills. Note the following ten commandments of member meetings:

Ten Commandments of Member Meetings⁵

- 1. Thou Shall come prepared to group meetings.**
- 2. Thou Shall seek common direction in working with others.**
- 3. Thou Shall share oneself as a resource in the group.**
- 4. Thou Shall be open to listen to the ideas of others.**
- 5. Thou Shall take responsibility for helping the group make decisions and solve problems.**
- 6. Thou Shall speak only for thyself.**
- 7. Thou Shall help evaluate the group effort.**
- 8. Thou Shall evaluate thine own contributions.**
- 9. Thou Shall help celebrate and honor successes.**
- 10. Thou Shall do what follow-up is agreed on after the meeting of the group.**

Try to start and end meetings on time. Most district board meetings, for example, shouldn't take much longer than two hours. It helps to use an agenda with a set amount of time allocated to each item. Following specific meeting procedures helps you achieve the ends of your meeting and use your and others' valuable volunteer time wisely. Also, setting a yearly calendar for all board meetings will help people know well in advance when meetings will take place. You might also stagger meeting times, in case there is a specific time of the day, week, or month that certain participants are unable to attend.

Conservation Plans

Part of many conservation district meetings involves approving landowner or operator conservation plans related to compliance with the conservation provisions of federal farm bill legislation.

Conservation plans are submitted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) district conservationist to the conservation district for review and approval. District approval is based on the feasibility and practicality of the conservation plan.

Approved conservation plans are subject to annual status reviews by the NRCS. If an NRCS status review finds a participant is not actively applying their plan, they will notify both the participants and your board. If the participant appeals for reconsideration, the NRCS will ask your board to review the appeal, meet the participant (if desired) and provide written recommendations to the NRCS. Your board's recommendation becomes part of the NRCS administrative record, but is not binding--the final decision remains with the NRCS.

Your district can request a variance if circumstances prevent participants in your district from carrying out their conservation plans.

⁵
Warden, J. and Associates, Anchorage, AK.

Idaho Water Quality Program for Agriculture

Districts administering a State Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA) implementation project must review and approve each participant's water quality plan. The participant develops this plan, with technical assistance from the agency assigned to the project.

Your board reviews each plan to make sure it meets project goals, has a logical sequence of **best management practices (BMPs)**, and is within the ability of the participant to carry out. The contract is not complete until agreed to by the participant, district, and those providing technical assistance.

If the district believes a participant has failed to comply with all terms and conditions of a WQPA contract, the district determines the penalty, notifies the participant, and sends appeals to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission. .

Minutes

Minutes are a very important part of meetings. Minutes provide a written record of the meeting and become very important as you deal with weighty issues, such as managing a grant. Minutes should include:

- Name of committee or board,
- Type of meeting,
- Date,
- Place,
- Name of presiding officer,
- Members and others present,
- Whether minutes of previous meeting were read and approved,
- Whether the month's treasurer's report was reviewed and approved,
- Correspondence,
- Major problems or issues,
- Motions made,
- Motions carried,
- Actions on special projects, and
- Length of meeting.

Normally, the board secretary or a district employee takes minutes, which are reviewed and approved the next meeting. Minutes should be sent out promptly after the meeting, so everyone has a written reference to commitments they made and can note corrections or additions to the minutes while the meeting is still fresh in their memory.

Annual Meetings

Annual meetings are a special type of Conservation District meetings. They are often large, banquet style affairs with an educational or inspirational presentation. Some districts opt for an informal outdoor function, such as a barbecue. Annual meetings provide an opportunity to interact informally with cooperators, assisting agencies, and other, as well as update them on current district activities and direction. They are also an occasion to recognize supervisors, agencies, and individuals who have helped in district programs.

Try to make your annual meeting as enjoyable as possible. An ad-hoc committee can make arrangements for an interesting location and send personal invitations. You should also send advance notices to the media.

Conservation District Finances

To develop effective conservation programs, your district board must obtain adequate funding. Conservation Districts receive and disburse **public funds**. Supervisors must also account for district funds and other assets (e.g., conservation tillage equipment, office buildings, etc.) The Procedures Manual lists specific procedures for issuing receipts, petty cash, etc. Conservation District funds should be handled only by supervisors or district employees who have been delegated this responsibility and have a surety bond.

Your board should have a **finance committee** to oversee all financial aspects of the district and help the board make informed decisions. The finance committee should: review sources of funding; develop budgets and budget reports; arrange required audits; assess how funds previously budgets were actually spent; and check the reliability of financial information. Ultimately, supervisors make decisions on budgets and all other financial matters. Be sure you understand all financial procedures and reports from the finance committee or treasurer before voting on any decision--even approving the report (see "financial review").

Funding

The first step in Conservation District funding is to define your district's need for funds. This is done in conjunction with the annual plan. Then you assess federal, state, or county appropriated funds, grants and local income-making projects.

Federal, State, and County Funds

Federal funds for Conservation Districts are sometimes available from the NRCS, through **cooperative agreements** for specific work. Many cooperative agreements (and grants) require the district to provide **matching funds**(a "match"). Occasionally, services or materials can be substituted for matching funds.

State funds for Conservation Districts are typically provided through the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission. General funds allocated to a district by the Commission cannot exceed twice the amount of funds or service allocated to the district by their county commissioners. Districts also receive base funds of \$5,000. See the Procedures Manual for more details on this.

Special project funding may also be available through the Idaho Association of Conservation Districts and federal programs.

Counties may also allocate funding to Conservation Districts. There are many reasons for the county to support your district. In addition to benefits provided to individual landowners in the county, Conservation District can help counties with soil surveys and interpretations for planning, county assessment, structures, highways, drainages, and environmental regulations. Counties may also



support their Conservation District financially because⁶:

- Preventing erosion can save dollars on road drainage clean-up efforts
- Preventing floods can save dollars on flood control and water supply problems
- Conservation improves local environmental quality and economic growth
- Salaries paid to Conservation District employees contribute to local economy
- Added value of well-cared for properties maintains the local tax base
- Conservation District programs are cost-effective because of high volunteer inputs, and
- Cooperative agreements with assisting agencies bring state and federal tax dollars and services back to the county.

Grants & Contracts

Grant and contract funds are awarded to an agency or organization on a competitive basis for a fixed period of time, usually for very specific purposes. Federal and state government, state councils on humanities, and private and industrial foundations are all sources of grants.

Grants & contracts are usually obtained by writing a **proposal**. Individual proposals usually follow a unique, detailed format outlined by the grantor. Typical proposals include:

1. A project summary
2. A statement of the problem
3. Methods to be used to solve the problem
4. Evaluation criteria
5. Future funding sources
6. A budget

The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission or the NRCS Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Coordinators can help you write grant proposals. Many private institutions also offer assistance to groups seeking funds through grants. Be sure you understand the details of all grants or contracts your district receives, because you, as board members, are held accountable for those funds.

Local Income Projects

Conservation Districts may undertake local fund-raising activities. Examples of such activities include:

- Conservation equipment rental (e.g., no-till drill)
- Real estate rental (e.g., office building)
- Fund raising drives
- Community and family foundations
- Special events: (e.g., raffles, bakesales, golf tournaments, walk-a-thons)
- Retail sales (e.g., conservation related items such as tree seedlings or conservation netting)

⁶ Adapted from: NACD. More dollars for your district.

- Service fees paid for providing conservation services such as soil testing or tree planting
- Direct appeals for donations through media, mail, or telephone
- Memorials and honorary gifts: (e.g., the relative of a deceased conservation-minded person establishing a scholarship fund in your memory)
- Membership (for individuals, agencies and/or organizations who make yearly contributions)
- Bequests
- Project sponsorship (e.g., newsletter)
- Advertisements in newsletters

Individual activities may be more or less appropriate for your area or specific efforts, set up an ad-hoc committee to develop a fundraising plan. As with other board activities, fund-raising should be a function of board members—not paid staff. Staff can help, but you are ultimately responsible.

In looking at these methods, be sure to take the cost of the fundraising into account. If the cost of raising funds is more than 1/3 of funds acquired, the effort should be closely scrutinized. *Standards for Charitable Solicitations*, issued by the Council of Better Business Bureaus, provides a fuller understanding of ethical aspects of many fundraising techniques. If fundraising efforts are successful, let everyone know--this is a visible sign of public support of your district!

Budgets

An important part of district finances is developing a budget to allocate Conservation District funds and other resources. Your district budget request must be prepared annually and submitted to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission by May.

This budget request covers the upcoming fiscal year and is prepared in conjunction with the district annual plan, district inventory, letter of intent from the county, and annual report.

The commission holds a public hearing each year by June 15, to consider the financial needs of each Idaho Conservation District and develop its request to the state for funding.

It is also a good idea to budget staff time to accomplish your objectives. You may also include dollar value estimates of volunteer contributions. To keep track of your budget status, the board treasurer should report on income, expenses, and other budget status information at monthly board meetings.

Accountability

Funds obtained by Conservation Districts are classified as **public funds** regardless of how obtained. As public officials, you are accountable for funds, property, and equipment belonging to your district. You should also report to the public on how you are using their resources.

Financial Reviews

Districts must provide for an annual financial review of accounts, receipts, and disbursements, which must be submitted to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission annually. This report must include a "statement of cash receipts and disbursements."

Reports

Another important part of accountability is keeping a documented public record of how your Conservation District uses money and volunteer support. Annual, quarterly, and special reports help you maintain contact with your community and show them what you do with public funds.

Reports don't have to be boring. Research your reports carefully to determine essential facts. Then use your reports as a tool for information and public relations. Your reports have to compete with many other pieces of communication--make them attractive and meaningful, with high quality printing. Use photos, nice graphics, and simple concise language to make your district's story as attractive and readable as possible. You might even consider asking your readers to fill out an evaluation form on your report.

Annual Reports

The annual report is the story of what your district did in the last year and what it will do in the future. It is your most important report and the one that will get the most public view. It should cover:

- Annual message from Chair
- Highlights or special events of the year
- Accomplishments (conservation practices achieved)
- A financial report (use charts, graphics)
- Thumbnail sketch of supervisors, staff, cooperating agencies and other involved with the district
- Remaining problems to be solved and future plans

You might also include quotations from "satisfied cooperators" and evaluation results. Your annual report can be a glossy brochure or an issue of the district newsletter or local newspaper. If you do one of the latter two, obtain extra copies for distribution to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and others who should receive this report.

Special Reports

Many grant sources require quarterly reports of project accomplishments, remaining tasks, problems encountered and fiscal data. There may also be specific local conservation issues that you want to address in a special report.

Legal Liabilities

Accountability is important because as stewards of public funds, and an entity working with individuals and other entities, legal complications may arise. As a district supervisor, you have some liability protection while discharging your official duties. As a

subdivision of state government, you can request help from the state attorney if necessary.

Hopefully, you will not need this protection. The best way to avoid legal problems is to conscientiously perform your job as a supervisor. Understand your role and responsibilities as specified in the Procedures Manual, keep accurate minutes, go to board meetings, keep well informed of what your district and district employees are doing, and **stay free of any potential conflicts of interest**. Board members shouldn't have any business transactions with the district, unless it is under specific conditions as stated in the Procedures Manual.

Assistance

Conservation Districts establish priorities and direct action on local natural resource concerns. Districts often work together on multi-district conservation activities, such as watershed projects. In all cases, **districts rely on cooperative assistance and funding** from federal, state, and local governments; district associations; and private organizations and businesses.

Many agencies and organizations have a strong interest in the same natural resources you work with. It is important to involve them in your activities. It is also important to become involved in their activities by providing your input and advice.

Assistance is set up formally through a Cooperative Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (see glossary for definitions). You can also involve groups more informally by appointing their representatives as associate supervisors, advisors, or committee members.

The days have ended when the forest may be viewed only as trees and trees viewed only as timber. The soil and the water, the grasses and the shrubs, the fish and the wildlife, and the beauty that is the forest must become integral parts of the resource manager's thinking and actions"

Hubert Humphrey

Federal agencies

Consolidated Farm Services Agency (CFSA)

The CFSA (formerly known as the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, ASCS) administers cost-sharing programs to farmers who implement conservation practices. It also provides aerial photos for conservation work, assistance for land treatment and development, and natural disaster relief.

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

The USDA-ARS researches the production, marketing, use, and improvement of soil, water, air, and agricultural products. ARS conducts research at numerous field locations throughout the U.S. and its territories and in several foreign countries.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (“The Corps”)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans and constructs reservoirs and local measures to control floods and improve navigation. It is active in flood control, hydroelectric power, municipal and industrial water supplies, and recreation as well as planning for all functions of water resource development.

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

The BPA is the sole federal power marketing agency in the Northwest and the region's major wholesaler of electricity to public and private utilities, industries, and various public agencies in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and parts of Montana, and surrounding western states. The Northwest Power Act charges BPA with additional duties related to energy conservation, resource acquisition, and fish and wildlife.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The EPA carries out federal pollution control laws. It also provides technical assistance to reduce air, water, and land pollution. The EPA provides funding to develop and install pollution treatment facilities.

Farmers Home/Rural Development Administration (FmHA/RDA)

The FmHA makes loans for farm ownership, operating expense, livestock emergencies, soil and water conservation, grazing, Indian tribe land acquisition, recreation, and subsidized and un-subsidized housing. The RDA helps develop the economics of communities, by providing grants, loans, and other forms of assistance for public works and development facilities, industrial and commercial expansion, redevelopment areas, and economic development districts.

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

The FWS is responsible for wild birds, mammals (except certain marine mammals), and inland sport fisheries. The FWS conducts research, assesses environmental impacts, and manages wildlife refuges.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

The USFS has federal responsibility for forestry. The USFS sponsors cooperative programs through state forestry agencies, the Cooperative Extension System, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and conservation districts to control fires, stabilize gullies, improve forest growth, and control forest pests.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

The USGS conducts studies on public lands as well as research in geology, geophysics, hydrology, cartography, and related sciences. It also studies natural hazards, such as earthquakes and volcanoes, and identifies flood hazard areas.

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

The BIA trustees Native American lands and helps them make the most effective use of their natural resources.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The BLM manages and leases the national resource lands and their resources to state and local government agencies, individuals, and nonprofit organizations.

National Park Service (NPS)

The NPS administers national parks, monuments, historic sites, and recreational areas for the enjoyment and education of citizens. It also helps state, local governments, and citizen groups develop park areas, and preserve historic properties.

Northwest Power Planning Council

The U.S. Congress authorized Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Oregon to enter into an interstate compact to create the Northwest Power Planning Council. The Council is a planning and policy making body that develops a 20-year electrical power plan and develops programs to protect and rebuild Columbia river basin fish and wildlife populations – both with extensive public involvement. The Council works with utilities, environmental groups, state and local governments, fish and wildlife agencies, Indian tribes, and others involved in energy, and fish and wildlife issues.

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)

The BOR locates, constructs, and maintains works to store, divert, and develop water in the western U.S. BOR projects provide for municipal and industrial water supply, hydroelectric power, irrigation, water quality improvement, fish and wildlife, outdoor recreation, flood control, and navigation.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS (formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service or SCS) has a long tradition of work with soil conservation districts. The NRCS provides personnel, equipment, office space, and counsel to districts. It also provides technical assistance with soils, conservation practices, and planning to land users and others. The Natural Resources Conservation Service also administers funding for Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) areas.

State Agencies

Idaho Department of Agriculture (IDA)

The Idaho Department of Agriculture administers state laws protecting agricultural producers from disease, insects, predators, and weeds. The IDA regulates fruit, seed, and other agricultural product grading. The IDA also issues and approves licenses for nursery dealers, pesticide operators, and pesticide applicators, and issues labeling permits for products used by agricultural producers such as seed, fertilizers, and pesticides. The IDA is also involved in water resources, transportation, farm labor, and other matters related to the production, distribution, and sale of agricultural commodities.

Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

The Division of Environmental Quality protects and enhances Idaho's environment, by addressing air pollution, water pollution, solid waste, hazardous waste, noise pollution, litter & resource recovery. DEQ is both an administrative and a regulatory agency with authority to enforce the state's environmental laws. DEQ monitors all major waterways, administers grants for waste water treatment facilities, and issues permits for all waste dischargers. DEQ also issues grants to reduce non-point water pollution.

Division of Financial Management (DFM)

The DFM provides budget planning and fiscal administration for state agencies. The DFM also monitors agency spending, maintains the statewide accounting system, and forecasts state population.

Idaho Department of Fish & Game (IFG)

The IF consists of the Game Commission and its staff. The IFG enforces state fish and game laws; classifies, monitors, and enhances wildlife species, numbers, and habitat; improves hunting and fishing access; and provides technical and financial assistance to landowners to enhance fish and wildlife habitat through the habitat improvement program (HIP).

Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)

The IDL manages and protects state-owned lands. The IDL also administers the Forest Practices Act (FPA), a state law regulating practices such as timber harvesting. IDL forest practice advisors also assist private landowners with the Agriculture Conservation Program (ACP), the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP), the Forest Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP) and provide other limited technical forestry assistance.

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the operation and maintenance of state park properties, land acquisition, park development, scenic rivers, and environmental protection programs.

Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (SCC)

The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission has five members appointed by the Governor. The Commission and its staff provide administrative and program assistance and guidance to districts, disseminate information, and seek sources of funding to aid in district operation.

Department of Transportation (DOT)

The DOT maintains the state's transportation system. This system includes roadways, bridges, general aviation, and capital facilities.

University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System (UI-CES)

Assistance from the University of Idaho (UI) is commonly found through the UI Cooperative Extension System. Extension faculty are available to educate soil conservation district supervisors and the groups they work with in agronomy, soils, animal sciences, forestry, range management, horticulture, rural development, youth development, and many other subject in which the University of Idaho conducts research. Most counties have and Extension office that serves as the local contact for soil conservation districts to request Extension programs.

Department of Water Resources (IDWR)

The Idaho Department of Water Resources appropriates and allots Idaho's groundwater resources and protects those resources against waste and contamination. IDWR regulates construction and use of all wells or holes that may provide a source of waste or contamination of groundwater. IDWR also enforces the Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act.

Local Government

County Government

Many soil conservation districts in Idaho are along county lines. While there is no legal relationship between the two counties can be helpful in several way. Counties can provide: office space; funding; co-sponsorship for watershed projects and responsibility for operation and maintenance; bridge and culvert replacement; use of county earthmoving equipment; cooperation on county parks and other county owned land; and soil survey funds. County contacts include: commissioner, council, auditor, treasurer, recorder, engineer, assessor, highway superintendent, health officer, planning commission, parks and recreation department, and weed districts.

Municipal Government

Municipal or “city” government can also be very helpful. Consider contacting the city mayor, council, planning commission, park board, street and water department, or other offices.

Tribal Government

Many Native American tribes are interested in conserving natural resources on tribal lands and on adjacent lands. They may be very interested in working together with your district on conservation issues of mutual concern.

Schools

Local schools can help your district carry out conservation education. School contacts include school board members, principals or superintendents, vocational agriculture instructors, and science and natural resource teachers.

Conservation District Associations

Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts (IASCD)

The IASCD is a non-profit, nongovernmental organization of the 51 soil conservation districts in Idaho. The IASCD is made up of six divisions of soil conservation districts and serves as a state voice for soil conservation districts on state policy, legislation, communication, and funding for conservation activities. The IASCD also provides forums to inform and train supervisors and recognize outstanding district individuals and programs. The IASCD has standing committees on: district operations/legislation/resolutions; drylands; education & public relations; forestry, recreation, & wildlife; public lands & range; resource conservation & development areas; research/plant materials; water quality/water research; and urban issues.

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)

The NACD is a non-profit, nongovernmental organization representing over three thousand districts and their state associations in the fifty states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. The NACD provides a national voice for conservation districts, through national conferences, brochures, reports, conservation films, training, and education.

Idaho District Employees Association (IDEA)

The IDEA was formed in 1986 to develop soil conservation district employee's abilities through continuing education, recognition, a network of professional support, and a forum to share new ideas and exchange information.

Private Organizations and Businesses

Assistance may also be obtained from other sources. Private organizations, such as fishing and hunting clubs and special interest groups, often have a strong interest in promoting conservation. Examples of helpful organizations include:

- Agricultural Commodity Commissions,
- Grange,
- Farm Bureau,
- Garden Clubs,
- 4-H Clubs,
- Boy and Girl Scouts,
- Chambers of commerce,
- Wildlife and recreation associations,
- Natural heritage foundations,
- Local environmental organizations,
- Future Farmers of America (FFA),
- Soil & Water Conservation Society (SWCS),
- Idaho Forest Owners Association (IFOA), and
- National Association of State Conservation Administrators (NASCA).

Private industries are often interested in conservation as a matter of improving their business climate. Don't be afraid to be creative in your search for resources for a quality program.

Glossary

Acreage Conservation Reserve (ACR): Acreage set aside under the CFSA acreage reduction program. Must be eligible land with eligible cover.

Ag in the Classroom: An education program designed to develop Idaho student awareness, appreciation, and understanding of how the food and fiber production system affects our economy and society. Instructors are trained and provided with a variety of educational resources appropriate to various age levels.

Agricultural Pollution Abatement Plan (Ag Plan): Certified in 1979 by Governor John Evans. The Ag Plan is Idaho's response to section 208 of the Federal Clean Water Act (PL2-500). It details how agricultural non-point source pollution is managed.

Best Management Practice (BMP): A practice or combination of practices determined to be most effective, practicable means of preventing or reducing non-point source pollution to acceptable levels.

Clean Water Act (1972) (CWA): Also known as the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 ET. SEQ.).

Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO): Areas where livestock are confined and fed.

Conservation Compliance: A conservation provision of the 1985 Food Security Act, which requires producers to implement a conservation plan for highly erodible fields to remain eligible for USDA program benefits. Plans had to be developed by December 21, 1989, and fully implemented by December 31, 1994.

Conservation Plan: A locally approved record of decisions made by the land user regarding the conservation of soil, water, and related plant and animal resources for all or part of an operating unit. Conservation plans also include resource material requested by a land user.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): A provision of the 1985 Food Security Act that encouraged farmers to plant highly erodible cropland to grass and/or trees through ten-year contracts with the USDA.

Cooperative agreement: An agreement between a soil conservation district and a landowner or operator located in the district to provide technical assistance for soil & water conservation.

Cooperator: A landowner or operator who has signed a cooperative agreement with the soil conservation district.

Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP): A process to help landowners, agencies, and resource users coordinate solutions to natural resource problems occurring over mixed land ownerships.

County Executive Director (CFSA) (CED): An employee of the CFSA who is responsible for all CFSA personnel and programs in a county.

District Conservationist (DC): Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee responsible for technical quality and local NRCS personnel within a soil conservation district.

District Education Award: Recognizes districts that conduct outstanding environmental conservation education or information programs.

Division: There are six divisions of soil conservation districts in Idaho. They were formed to provide communication and cooperation between soil conservation districts, secure consensus on natural resource issues, inspire supervisors to greater leadership, and act as a liaison with the IASCD.

Doyle Scott Award: Presented by IASCD annually in honor of Doyle Scott, who served for many years as SCC Administrator. The award is given to an individual for exceptional personal contributions to the soil and water conservation movement in Idaho.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): A document that discusses the likely significant impacts of a development project or a planning proposal, ways to lessen the impacts, and alternatives to the project or proposal. EIS's are required by the National and Idaho Environmental Policy Acts.

Envirothon: A problem-solving natural resource education program for high school students. Participants compete in a state contest, from which the winners may attend a national contest.

Erodibility Index (EI): A numerical index indicating the potential of a soil to erode, based on topography, precipitation, soil characteristics, and other factors.

Extension Educator: see section on assistance – University of Idaho.

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC): An agency of the USDA that offers farmers insurance against loss of crops due to natural hazard such as drought, flood, or freeze.

Federal Water Quality Act – Section 319: Section 319 of the Clean Water Act amendments of 1987 specifically requires states to develop an assessment of non-point source pollution and a management plan for controlling such pollution.

Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG): A guide developed specifically for each NRCS field office and used by the NRCS to assure quality of technical advice on conservation systems planning and application.

Fiscal Year (“FY”): A twelve-month period for which a complete financial accounting is made. This period often varies from agency to agency.

Food, Ag, Conservation & Trade Act (FACTA): A federal law with provisions on: Conservation Reserve, Conservation Compliance, Sodbuster, and Swampbuster. Also known as the 1990 Farm Bill.

Forest Practices Act (FPA): The Idaho Department of Lands enforces these laws that regulate road and trail construction, timber harvest, pre-commercial thinning, reforestation, fertilization, chemical use, and other forest practices.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP): Cost-share program for forestry conservation and reforestation practices.

Full Time Equivalent (FTE): The work one person does in one year – used to estimate costs and personnel needed to perform certain actions.

Funding Advisory Committee (FAC): Committee established to prioritize water quality grant applications being considered for funding and make recommendations to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and the Idaho Board of Health and Welfare.

General Services Administration (GSA): An independent agency of the U.S. government that manages and supervises the government's property and equipment, including the construction and operation of government buildings.

Habitat Improvement Program (HIP): A cost share program administered by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to develop habitat on private lands for waterfowl and upland game birds.

Highly Erodible Land (HEL): Land having an erodibility index greater than eight.

In-kind Local Match: Many grants require grantees to provide "matching funds." On some grants, time or services contributed toward a specific project can be substituted for these funds. An in-kind match cannot include items that a district pays for.

Interagency Personnel Agreement (IPA): An agreement between agencies to share personnel.

Letter of Intent: A letter obtained by local Conservation Districts from County Commissioners stating the county intent to provide a specific amount of money during a county's fiscal year to help the district carry out a conservation program. The State of Idaho is authorized to match the county funds not to exceed twice the county allocation.

Long-Term Agreement (LTA): Agreement with landowner/operator to apply conservation practices. It contains practices to be applied, schedule of application, and cost-share rates, if appropriate.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA): *See Memorandum of Understanding.*

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): An agreement between a soil conservation district and another public entity for services, funding, or other program assistance. Sometimes referred to as Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): Law requiring the federal government to consider environmental impacts of their activities (see also SEPA).

National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES): A part of the Federal Clean Water Act, which requires point source dischargers to obtain discharge permits. These permits are referred to as NPDES permits and are administered by the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality.

Non-point Source Pollution: Pollution from many small sources which accumulate in surface or ground water. Individual sites are insignificant but add to a cumulative problem with serious health or environmental consequences.

Point of Order: A parliamentary procedure term for an objection raised by a member because of improper procedure or annoying remarks. It must be ruled on immediately by the chair.

Procedures Manual: A reference manual developed by the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission that contains information on rules, regulations, policy, organizational structure, and financial and administrative procedure of the Idaho soil conservation districts.

Project Learning Tree (PLT): An environmental and conservation youth education program emphasizing forestry. It is an unbiased approach to presenting basic forest practices and developing an appreciation for forest resources. Instructors are trained and provided with a variety of educational resources appropriate to various age levels.

Project WET: An environmental and conservation youth education program emphasizing water resources. Instructors are trained and provided with a variety of educational resources appropriate to various age levels.

Project WILD: An environmental and conservation youth education program emphasizing wildlife. It is an unbiased approach to presenting basic wildlife management practices and developing an appreciation for wildlife. Instructors are trained and provided with a variety of educational resources appropriate to various age levels.

Public Law 83-566 (PL 566): Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act. Federal law detailing cost sharing to plan and implement practices on small watersheds.

Public Law 92-500 – Federal Water Pollution Control Act – Section 208: Federal legislation setting national goals to eliminate water pollution. Section 209 addresses non-point pollution.

Quorum: The minimum number of members required to be present at a meeting to transact business. Three of five, or four of seven Idaho soil conservation district supervisors constitute a quorum.

Referendum: Proposed law or bond issue submitted on the ballot for approval by the people voting.

Resources Conservation Act (PL95-192): This act directs the Secretary of Agriculture to continually appraise non-federal soil, water, and related sources.

Resource Conservation & Development Areas (RC&Ds): RC&D areas are locally organized, sponsored, and directed organizations of people that receive technical and financial help from the UDSA, and other organizations, to conserve and use natural resources. Soil Conservation Districts are one of many RC&D sponsors.

Resource Management System (RMS): A combination of conservation practices that if installed and maintained, protect the resource base by meeting tolerable soil losses, and maintain acceptable water quality, ecological, and management levels for a specific resource use.

Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE): An empirical equation derived from theory of erosion processes and years of data from natural runoff plots and rainfall simulator data. RUSLE is a revision and update of the universal soil loss equation

(USLE) which has been widely used since the 1960's. The RUSLE equation factors represent the effect of climate, soil, topography, and land use on sheet and rill erosion and can be used to guide conservation planning tailored to individual field sites.

Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP): The Clean Water Act of 1977, PL 95-217 includes this federal cost sharing program for implementation of BMPs. Administered by the NRCS.

Sodbuster: Provision of the 1985 Food Security Act that requires a conservation plan to be implemented on highly erodible cropland that was not cropped between 1981 and 1985, to remain eligible for USDA program benefits.

Soil Loss Tolerance (T): The erosion rate in tons/acre/year at which a soil would not deteriorate.

Solutions to Economic and Environmental Problems (STEEP): A three-state effort to research cost-effective ways to prevent erosion in the Pacific Northwest and disseminate this research to agricultural producers.

State Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA): Provides financial and technical assistance to private landowners and operators to implement BMPs needed to reduce agricultural non-point source pollution in approved project areas. Administered by the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission, and local soil conservation districts.

Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP): Cost-share program for forestry conservation and reforestation practices.

Swampbuster: Conservation provision of the 1985 Food Security Act that requires farmers not to convert wetlands to annually tilled crops (after December 23, 1985), to remain eligible for USDA program benefits.

Water Quality (WQ): The biological, chemical, and physical condition of a water body.

Water Quality Act (1987) (WQA): A Federal law (PL 100-4) to amend Federal Water Pollution Control Act to provide for the renewal of the quality of the nation's waters. Section 319 details the legislation that relates to agricultural non-point pollution.

Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP): A plan designed to improve water quality by encouraging implementation of the best management practices through information or education activities, technical assistance, and incentives for BMP adoption.

Watershed: The geographic area from which a particular river, stream, or water body receives its water supply.

Position Description: *Idaho Soil Conservation District Supervisor*

Description

Soil conservation district supervisors serve on a five or seven member board that develops and implements programs to protect and conserve soil, water, prime and unique farmland, rangeland, woodland, wildlife, energy, and other renewable resources on local non-federal lands.

Duties

- Identify local conservation needs and develop, implement, and evaluate programs to meet them.
- Inform landowners and operators, general public, and local, state, and federal legislators on conservation issues and programs.
- Supervise other volunteers and paid staff working with the district; coordinate with cooperating agency personnel.
- Administer the district by delegating tasks through a structure of board officers and members, committees, and others. Secure and budget district funds, and report on activities to the public.
- Coordinate assistance and funding from federal, state, and local government; district associations; and private groups.

Qualifications

- Interest and background in conserving natural resources.
- Communication skill.

Relationships

- Other District Supervisors.
- Idaho Soil Conservation Commission.

Benefits

- Learn about conservation issues.
- Satisfaction in seeing conservation practices applied.
- Interaction with others interested in natural resource conservation.
- Input into local, state, and federal conservation programs.
- Training through Idaho Soil Conservation Commission, and IASCD, and other sources.

Time Required

- Four-year term. Attend 12 regularly scheduled board meetings, as well as committee and other special meetings—for an average of 30 days/year.

(This is a sample – adapt it to your district as appropriate)

A Year at a View
For Idaho Soil Conservation District Supervisors

Month	Activity/Deadline
<i>January:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • Review memorandums of understanding between SCDs and applicable agencies. • Review working agreements with SCD employees. • Contact County Commissioners to request funds for this year and discuss funding for next year (discuss the economic evaluation from your five-year plan). • Newly elected supervisors take office. • New supervisor orientation. • Elect SCD board officers.
<i>February:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • New supervisor orientation. • Begin planning for Soil Stewardship Week. • NACD National Convention.
<i>March:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • IASCD spring division meetings.
<i>April:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • Finish the budget request forms by end of April. • Receive budget hearing notice. • Begin updating 5-year plan.
<i>May:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • Continue updating five year plan. • Budget request hearing held by SCC. • Hold public meeting on five-year plan.
<i>June:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • Prepare issues, as appropriate, for IASCD and IDEA Directors to discuss at their July biannual meetings.
<i>July:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • District books to auditor. • District receives first allocation of state and supplemental funding. • Begin annual report.
<i>August:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • Review election procedures and information, provide notification of open member positions and circulate nominating petitions. • Review last year's IASCD resolutions. • Write resolution for IASCD Convention.

<i>September:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting • Submit resolutions to IASCD Chairman for IASCD Convention. • Press release on district elections. • SCD financial review due to SCC. • SCD annual report due to SCC. • Five year plan due to SCC. • District inventory due to SCC.
<i>October:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • IASCD Fall Division Meetings. • Receive SAWQP "Letters of Intent." • Prepare for Supervisor elections.
<i>November:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections. • SCD board meeting. • IASCD Annual Meeting and Convention. • Submit SAWQP letter of intent to SCC and DEQ.
<i>December:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCD board meeting. • Oaths of office to SCC by end of December. • District receives second allocation of state and supplemental funding. • Certificate of receipt of county funds due to SCC.

References

Many of the sources below were accessed to develop this handbook. You may find it useful to consult them directly to get further details on the issues addressed here. They may be found at your local library or located through the UI Cooperative Extension System or the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission.

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